



Public-Private Foundation

National Environmental Education and Training Foundation

Background

The National Environmental Education and Training Foundation (NEETF) is a national leader in bringing objective and scientifically sound environmental education to all Americans, from business leaders and public officials to educators and children. The foundation, a private, nonprofit organization authorized in 1990 by Congress, endeavors to ensure that environmental learning is infused into the discussion of issues crucial to our nation's future, such as controlling health care costs, remaining competitive in the world business economy, improving the nation's standing in science education, conserving fresh water supplies through voluntary actions, and fostering sustainable use of our natural resources.



How Does NEETF Support Environmental Education?

NEETF supports environmental education through program initiatives and grants. Its programs and grants help both adults and children understand their role in environmental stewardship and acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills and develop the behaviors they need to maintain, protect, and improve the environment. Through its programs, the Foundation directly pursues special projects that advance environmental education. NEETF staff, supported as needed by advisors who have highly specialized skills, carry out those programs. As a grant maker, NEETF awards matching funds to a variety of education and training efforts that increase the environmental literacy of the public. As both grant maker and project initiator, the Foundation maintains public and private partnerships and supports challenge grants.

NEETF Programs

NEETF directly sponsors programs that address issues related to business and the environment, health and the environment, educational achievement in the classroom, and volunteerism in land and resource management. Among the Foundation's priority programs are:

- **The Institute for Corporate Environmental Mentoring**, a business-to-business mentoring program through which large companies educate smaller companies about how to cut costs and improve profits through better environmental performance
- **The Wellness and the Environment Program**, a four-part effort the Foundation conducts in collaboration with leading public health and medical organizations to educate health care professionals in environmental issues to improve their ability to make accurate diagnoses and provide appropriate treatment

- The Water Source Project provides education to individuals and community leaders about the health and economic benefits of protecting drinking water sources, rather than relying solely on costly treatment plants
- Foundations for the Future, a partnership with major national environmental education organizations to ensure that environmental education is based on sound science and promotes balance and excellence in educational achievement
- National Public Lands Day (NPLD), an annual nationwide event that gives citizens a hands-on opportunity to become involved in land and recreational improvements on the nation's public lands while learning about the environment

NEETF Initiatives

To fulfill its mission to foster “essential environmental knowledge” in all Americans, NEETF sponsors a number of initiatives. Among those initiatives are:

- **Partners for Resource Education** involves the general public in the effort to balance economic and other needs with the need to maintain and protect environmental health. Under the program, NEETF works in partnership with five federal agencies — the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service — to develop the *Ecosystem Matters Tool Kit*, a package of materials designed to educate citizens about the principles of ecosystem management and the role of healthy ecosystems in supporting quality of life.
- **“NEETF/Roper National Report Card: Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors of American Adults”** is a multi-year effort by NEETF and Roper Starch Worldwide to collaborate on an attitudinal survey of adult Americans. In 1997, not only did the NEETF/Roper survey contain six years of data on environmental attitudes and opinions, but also an assessment of the public's environmental knowledge. The survey asked 12 basic questions about such subjects as air and water pollution, conservation, and garbage disposal. It also assessed the degree to which the public engages in ten individual behaviors that have an impact on the environment, such as recycling, and then evaluated the degree to which environmental knowledge relates to those behaviors. Also included in the survey were questions to determine the degree to which Americans support environmental education being taught in schools. Each year, NEETF has made the data compiled through the survey available to the media, policy makers, other environmental

organizations, and the business community. The Foundation believes that distributing this data is an important part of its mission to correct myths about public opinion and attitudes, so that the policy makers and the private sector can develop approaches to environmental issues that benefit the nation.

- **Friends of Environmental Education Fund** expands support for the Foundation's initiatives and operating expenses. Among the private sector donors to the fund are individuals, foundations, and major corporations.
- **Environmental Education Roundtable Discussions** strengthen environmental education grant programs.

The program initiatives NEETF supports benefit the American people in numerous ways, among them:



- *Protection of human health and reduction of the costs of health care* by building public awareness of the adverse health effects of environmental degradation, supporting health care providers in improving their diagnostic skills, and educating citizens about the need to improve preventative health care
- *Conservation of the nation's national resources*, including farm land, timber and mineral resources, water supplies, and fossil fuel reserves
- *Reduction of losses caused by natural disasters*, such as floods, hurricanes, and fires, by educating the public about the natural forces that bring about such disasters and about avoiding danger and reducing the damage disasters cause
- *Promotion of sustained economic growth*, by encouraging communities to recognize the role of natural settings in attracting and keeping businesses that strengthen local economies
- *Encouragement of self-rule within the community and creative individual action* by supporting the development of an environmentally literate citizenry that ultimately will solve the nation's most difficult environmental problems

NEETF's Grant Program

As a grant maker, NEETF awards funds appropriated by Congress to support a range of environmental education efforts. NEETF targets programs that foster informed decision making at home, in the community, at school, and at work, seeking programs that:

- Address environmental issues that affect health and pose significant long-term threats to society
- Train teachers to effectively integrate environmental education into their curricula
- Promote training of the workforce in environmental issues
- Strengthen the focus of the field of environmental education by duplicating environmental education projects that have been proven successful

Each year, NEETF receives proposals for support for programs that foster those goals. The Foundation's staff and its Board of Directors, made up of experts in education, environmental issues, and management, work with peer reviewers to select approximately one project in ten for funding. In fiscal year 1998, NEETF awarded competitive challenge grants in three program areas: health and environment, safe water, and environmental education excellence. Three such projects that the Foundation has funded are described below.

ToxRAP Network

Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute

Piscataway, New Jersey

Despite the evidence linking environmental hazards to human health, ToxRAP (Toxicology, Risk Assessment and Pollution) is one of the only K-9th grade curricula available on the subject. This grant will support the establishment of the ToxRAP Network leadership teams. Using a train-the-trainer model, the network will reach 500 educators in Arizona, California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina in the first year.

De-centralized Wastewater Planning/Education Project

Marine Studies Consortium

Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

The health of many coastal ecosystems are suffering from wastewater contamination that poisons shellfish and threatens human health. Failing septic systems can be replaced with efficient, cost-effective alternatives to centralized sewer systems. This grant will support alternative waste-water planning, design, and management training for 300 municipal, engineering, and regulatory personnel in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and neighboring states.

What Determines Responsible Environmental Behavior? Evaluation of an EE Model

University of Michigan, School of Natural Resources and Environment

Ann Arbor, Michigan

The relationships between environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors have been theorized but not rigorously tested. This grant will support a statistical assessment of the leading environmental education behavior model proposed by Hungerford and Volk in 1990. Outcomes will guide future environmental education priority setting.

For additional information about NEETF or its grant program, contact:

Kevin J. Coyle, President

Phone: (202) 628-8200; Fax: (202) 628-8204

Or visit the World Wide Web at

<http://www.neetf.org>

Or contact:

Michael Baker, Acting Director

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Environmental Education

Phone: (202) 260-4965; Fax: (202) 260-4095

